Draft Framework for Health-Promoting Schools

This Framework is intended to provide guidance and support to not only school boards and schools but also health authorities and other organizations. This framework can be a tool to review and/or develop polices and practices that strengthen the capacities of schools to be settings for learning and promoting health. The framework stresses the importance of involving the whole school community and partnerships beyond the school.

The BC Health-Promoting Schools Framework includes a vision, mission, principles, and domains for action.

Vision

All children in British Columbia belong to school communities that are committed to promoting student achievement and health.

Mission

To create and maintain the capacities of school communities to promote health

Principles

The health-promoting school framework utilizes the following principles:

- **A population health focus:** recognizes that the determinants of health (e.g. such as education, income, social status, social support networks, physical environment, genetics, health practices, and coping skills) affect the health of individuals.
- **A holistic approach:** views individual's health holistically - the physical, social, mental, and intellectual dimensions of health.
- **A comprehensive approach:** includes all three domains described below, which are integral to health-promoting schools. No one domain is more important or more necessary than any other. Together they provide a comprehensive approach.
- **Effectiveness:** uses current research and best-practice evidence to provide decision-makers with the knowledge to inform and engage the school and the wider community as it determines policy and practices.

Domains

Three interconnected domains characterize the health-promoting schools framework. Each of these is critical to creating and maintaining a health-promoting school.

Domain 1: Teaching and learning

This domain includes what students learn, how they are taught, and which learning resources are used by teachers for instruction.

Schools provide learning activities so that students will acquire the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that facilitate healthy choices and decision-making.

Health-related learning encompasses not only the health-related outcomes students are expected to achieve through the prescribed curriculum, but also the less formal learning that takes place throughout the school environment.

School policies and practices reinforce classroom learning by planned informal learning throughout the school environment. Modeling of healthy choices by adults and older students significantly affects the learning of students.

The prescribed learning outcomes in the Integrated Resource Packages of the BC curriculum include health-related outcomes that describe the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to make healthy choices the easy choices.

Domain 2: School environment, culture and organization

This domain includes not only the physical environment of the school and school grounds, but also the 'feel' of the school environment.

A health-promoting school has both a safe and welcoming physical environment that prevents injury and provides students with easy choices to be healthy; for example, access to healthy food choices and opportunities to be physically active. It also has a social environment that is nurturing, respectful, and free from discrimination.

Policies, codes of conduct, administrative practices, and communication pathways all contribute to social and organizational environments of schools.

Numerous informal opportunities in the school environment reinforce healthy behaviors. An example is to provide students and staff with access to healthy food choices.

Domain 3: Partnerships, supports, and services

This domain includes supports and services within a school that help students to be physically and emotionally healthy and also partnerships beyond the school community that contribute to health promotion in the school setting.

Health-promoting schools include services and supports for students who are vulnerable to health risks, integrating them whenever possible with services from community agencies. They also enhance and extend school-based expertise and resources by working in partnerships with the greater community.

Families are a key partner supporting and contributing to a health-promoting school environment. Organizations beyond the school have a rich array of information, resources, and services to offer.

By providing community partners with a voice in developing policies and practices that promote health, a sense of school and community connectedness can be achieved. A systematic approach for all these partners to work together in setting common goals and actions is important. For example, strong relationships between health authorities and school boards will enrich and improve school health policies and practices.

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Implications for school boards and schools

School boards and other school leaders that are committed to having health-promoting schools may need to review or develop new policies and practices. The following set of questions is intended to facilitate discussion and prompt actions that will help to support both learning and health of BC's children and youth.

Policies

Effective health-promoting school policies may address all three domains or only one of the domains. There are no one-size fits all policies, since they must be meaningful to the current situation in a school or school district and relevant to the context of a particular school.

Examples of questions to guide discussion about policies:

- Do our policies reflect the public and community concerns and interest in improving the health of children and youth?
- Do our policies address the key health risk factors for our children and youth: physical inactivity, poor dietary habits, tobacco use, alcohol and other drug misuse, intentional and unintentional injuries, and sexually transmitted diseases?
- How are policies implemented? Are policies communicated to the entire school and greater community? How effective is the mechanism for this communication?
- How have we included the whole school community (students, parents, staff and wider community) in a meaningful way in policy review or development?
- What steps have been taken to respect diversity so that everyone's skills, values and experiences are honoured? How have we sought and welcomed the contribution of diverse cultures and groups as we review or develop new health-promoting policies?

Practices

Domain 1: Teaching and learning

Examples of questions to guide discussion about teaching and learning:

- Has our school board/school assessed its capacity to deliver an effective instructional program that addresses health?
- To what extent are health-related learning outcomes in the prescribed curriculum being achieved by students?
- Are sufficient instructional time and resources devoted to these important areas? Is instruction being integrated across subject areas?
- What has been done to facilitate staff development in areas related to promoting health (e.g. healthy eating, physical activity, school connectedness, substance misuse, bully prevention)?
- How are principals, teachers, and other staff encouraged to use informal teaching and to model healthy behaviours in the school's operational and teaching practices?
- What opportunities exist for staff, parents, and students to learn about practices that contribute to health-promoting schools?

Domain 2: Environment, culture and organization

Examples of questions to guide discussion about school environment:

- What should be done to make the school environment physically safe and welcoming? What aspects of the physical environment could be easily changed to decrease the likelihood of injury?
- Have we assessed how welcome students feel in school? What have we done to address the needs of students who may not feel welcome?
- What have we done to implement the *Safe, Caring and Orderly* School standards provided in 2004 by the Ministry of Education?
- In what ways beyond physical education instruction does the school environment provide opportunities for students and staff to be more physically active? What can we do to involve students who are not typically physically active and to increase all students' level of physical activity?
- What are we doing to involve students in decisions and fostering student-led activities?
- How have we made sure that students and staff have access to healthy food choices in school meal programs, school cafeterias, vending machines, or school stores?

- To what extent does the range of extra-curricular activities available in the school provide opportunities for students of varied interests to be involved, to develop school connectedness and a sense of belonging?

- What have we done to support peer counselling, peer tutoring, and other types of service learning in our school communities?

Domain 3: Partnerships, supports and services

Examples of questions to guide discussion about partnerships:

- What have we done to conduct an inventory of current resources, champions, and community partners that could contribute to health promotion at the school district level? At the school level?

- What is the mechanism by which partners are identified and involved at the school district level? The school level?

- Is there a broad range of relevant health and community partners engaged with the school board or school regarding health promotion? What partners have we involved and how should we expand these partnerships?

- Specifically, what have we done to develop a partnership between the school and health sectors in our area? Do we have a strong collaborative partnership with the local health authority?

- How effective are referrals to community health and other community agencies? What can be done to improve referral pathways so that the services students need are easier to access and more effective?

- What steps have we taken in the school district to work in partnership with community service providers to integrate services that foster students' physical and emotional health?

Model

British Columbia Health-Promoting Schools Framework Model

Vision

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Mission

To create and maintain the capacities of school communities to promote health

Principals

- Population health focus
- Holistic Approach
- Comprehensive Approach
- Effectiveness